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RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR PRIORITY 0016
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RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0533
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 000377

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZSTAN PREPARING FOR SCO SUMMIT IN AUGUST

REF: A. BISHKEK 228

[1](#)B. BEIJING 1895

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Classified By: Amb. Marie L. Yovanovitch, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 12, below.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary. Kyrgyzstan is preparing to host the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Bishkek in August. President Bakiyev has said that the summit is Kyrgyzstan's top foreign policy priority, and has pledged that Bishkek will be ready on time. The Kyrgyz government has pitched the summit domestically as a money maker, and is looking for "economic outcomes." Little work has been done on the substance of the summit, and the agenda will be worked out at a July meeting of SCO country foreign ministers, also in Bishkek. Slow initial progress on infrastructure and funding shortages pushed back the date for the summit from June to August and fueled rumors that the summit could be shifted to another country, but Bakiyev has beefed-up the budget for the event, and the Chinese have reportedly offered financial assistance. The Kyrgyz government has warned the domestic political opposition against any actions that could disrupt the summit, and some in the opposition have expressed concern that the government may use the summit as an excuse to crack down on political dissent. Bakiyev wants to use a successful summit to show he belongs on the same stage as the other leaders and to score points in the unsettled domestic political environment. End Summary.

NO AGENDA YET

13. (C) While the Kyrgyz government has focused so far on administrative and infrastructure preparations, little work has been done on the substance of this summer's SCO summit. There have been some preliminary discussions on possible transport and energy agreements, but the summit's agenda will be developed following a June meeting in Bishkek of SCO country defense ministers, and it will be finalized at a July foreign ministers' meeting, also in Bishkek.

INFRASTRUCTURE PREPARATIONS FINALLY UNDERWAY

14. (C) By all accounts, Kyrgyzstan was slow to begin preparations for this summer's SCO summit in Bishkek. Early preparations were plagued by a lack of planning and funding, and infrastructure improvements needed to host the guests fell behind schedule. The delays pushed back the summit date from June to August and fueled rumors that the venue might shift to another country. At a February lunch of OSCE ambassadors, however, the Russian and other SCO country ambassadors discounted the possibility of shifting the summit to another country. They were adamant that the summit had to be held here in order to show that Kyrgyzstan was a "stable country." (NOTE: Other ambassadors present remarked that this was the first "active participation" by SCO country ambassadors at an OSCE event here. END NOTE.) In mid-March, Foreign Minister Ednan Karabayev maintained to the press that the delay was due to the schedules of the SCO country leaders, not to organizational problems.

15. (C) Presidential chief of staff Myktybek Abdyldayev, who heads the summit's organizational committee, said that the

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preparatory work would include revamping the terminal at Manas international airport, overhauling the road connecting Manas airport to the city, preparing cultural programs, and building a hall for the summit plus three guest houses. In Bishkek, there have been a few visible signs of preparations: some curb-side kiosks have been removed from major streets, new trees have been planted along the airport road, and builders are working around the clock to finish the guest houses. Former SCO Deputy Executive Secretary Jeenbek Kulubayev (now at the MFA) told emboff that alternate venues, such as the Hyatt hotel, would be used if construction was not complete by the start of the summit.

BAKIYEV: A TOP PRIORITY

16. (C) President Bakiyev has repeated on several occasions that hosting the summit was a top foreign policy priority for the country. He has urged residents of Bishkek to clean up the city for the visiting dignitaries, and he reportedly beefed-up the budget to 350 million som (approximately USD 9 million) for the organizing committee. The Chinese have also reportedly provided the Kyrgyz with money (approx. USD 6 million) for the summit budget. Bakiyev has stressed that international exposure for Kyrgyzstan from a successful summit would lead to investment projects in the country. Kulubayev also told us that the Kyrgyz side hoped for "economic outcomes" from the summit, and he said that expert-level discussions were underway for transport and energy agreements.

POSSIBLE THREATS?

17. (C) Bakiyev has warned the political opposition against any actions that would disrupt the summit. He has emphasized that there needs to be stability in the run up to the summit. Speaking to the cabinet on March 28, Bakiyev again dismissed the opposition's demand for early presidential elections, saying he would consider holding a referendum on his

presidency -- but only after the SCO summit. Foreign Minister Karabayev has said publicly that the summit would go forward regardless of any opposition rallies or protests.

¶18. (SBU) Former Prime Minister Felix Kulov, leader of the opposition United Front for a Decent Future for Kyrgyzstan, has disavowed any intention of disrupting the SCO summit, saying that the opposition's demands and the SCO summit were separate issues (Ref A). Kulov has called for Bakiyev to resign and hold early presidential elections, and the United Front is moving ahead with plans for demonstrations, starting April 9 in the regions and April 11 in Bishkek, and continuing until this demand is met.

¶19. (C) The security services have raised the specter of terrorist threats in connection with the summit. In addition, Bishkek Mayor Nogoyev speculated that terrorists might stage attacks against foreign delegations during the summit. Opposition MP Temir Sariyev thought otherwise, however, telling reporters that he believed the government may attempt to inflate such threats to save face should preparations for the event fail. Other opposition figures have raised the concern that the government would use the issue of threats as an excuse to crack down on political dissent in the run up to the planned April demonstrations.

COMMENT

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¶10. (C) Bakiyev has staked a lot on hosting the summit in Bishkek, and he wants to use a successful summit to show himself a player on the international stage, as well as to strengthen his hand domestically. Simply declaring the summit a "top foreign policy priority" has not, however, made the preparations go any more smoothly. The increased budget and assistance from the Chinese should help move the infrastructure projects forward. The domestic political situation remains unsettled and potentially volatile, and the government may use the need to ensure "stability" in the run-up to the summit as a rationale for taking a hard line with the opposition. With so much focus on the optics of the event, and how it plays in the current domestic political turmoil, the Kyrgyz appear to have paid little attention to the substance of the summit, beyond the hope for "economic outcomes." And if they are further along in their thinking, they have not shared this with us.

¶11. (C) Other SCO members may be further along than the Kyrgyz in identifying deliverables for the summit, but it appears the agenda is still being shaped. From our perspective, one major concern for the summit is heading off efforts to pressure the Kyrgyz to close -- or set a timetable for closing -- Manas Air Base. Kyrgyz Defense Minister Isakov told the Ambassador April 4 that the Base was frequently raised by his counterparts in SCO. He did not expect the Base to be raised during the plenary session, but he did anticipate it would be discussed on the margins of the summit.

¶12. (C) Action request: We recommend the Department consider reaching out to SCO members now, in order to influence the agenda.

YOVANOVITCH